DAVID MARSŌN

CONVERSATIONS WITH NONO

March 1988
4723 Todd Road
Sebastopol, California

"...a transcription from a video of my grandfather, David Marson, talking about his memory with the poultry industry as well as his struggles in reaching his goals as an independent small business man."

—Renée Marson De Vences

We brought you out here to your old place in Sebastopol to talk about what it was like to raise chickens...quite a few years ago. Why don't you introduce yourself...

My name is David Marson...MARSŌN. I'm from Italy, by Venice. There was no industry--nor work, just farmers on Cordenones. There was a Coppermill--the work was more for women. I was a farmer. I didn't have time to go to school. I got through the third grade, then I had to go to work... The climate and the jobs brought me here to California. You see, I was in Canada and I went to Oregon. In Oregon, they didn't have any jobs either. Then me and my uncle--we came to California. In Concord, there was a cement factory. The Cowel Cement Company, and I got a job there. A couple of months then I worked in the Quarry for the cement company. After I quit there I went to San Francisco. When I left Italy, I was married (for about a week). I left my wife over there (with the family) and went to Canada. From Canada to Oregon...to California. I'm perd' near 100. I was born July 24, 1890. First I worked in the cannery, then I

washed dishes in the St. Francis Hotel. Then I worked in the shipyard in San Francisco... She (Nona) got there (to S.F.) when I was washing dishes. Then I had to buy her ticket over (from Italy after saving for two years). I worked in the shipyards four years, afterwards I came up to Santa Rosa. The boys from Petaluma used to always talk about the chickens. They were always talking about coming back from the shipyard after the war (WWI) was over and come in stronger (with chickens). That's when I decided when I got laid off from the shipyard to come up to Santa Rosa. I looked here and there. I rented a place off Piner Road. They only had room for 500 chickens. Then I decided to buy the land here on Todd Road. It cost me $200.00 an acre. We moved from San Francisco to Piner Road. Me and my brother bought ten acres a piece (on Todd Road). Then we started to build (the house and chicken houses).

First I built the brooder house. Then I built a 20' x 40' chicken house. The next year I built another 40-foot and another few years another 40-foot...then another 40-foot. All in one, three sections, 40 feet each. I had a little more then 1,400 White Leghorns at one time. We also raised some Rhode Island Reds for meat.

First I used to go with horse and wagon to bring them (the eggs) to the Sebastopol plant. After I quit delivering they used to come and pick them up...the egg company...the Poultry Producers of Central California. They picked them up about twice a week. Me and my wife--she took care of the baby chicks and

packed the eggs and cleaning, about 30 dozen in boxes. Then they would go to Poultry Producers in Petaluma.

My best year in the business? Was when I went out of business! Ha Ha! I can't remember... In 1929, when we had 1,400 chickens. Well, I never got the Chicken Pox, I had bronchitis a couple of times. They (the eggs) never had a high price. When eggs brought 12 cents a dozen (during the depression) a lot of chicken men went broke. I didn't have to pay nobody. We did all our own work. They (the other chicken ranchers) had more chickens and more help. When they couldn't pay the help they had to sell out the chickens they (the chickens) ate near all the profit. They were pretty tough years--but we never went around with the car burning gas for fun...never go to movies...all those years. We used to make our own salami and kill the pig. Then we had the experience from the old country.

After we got some better years. Your dad, he used to help us a lot cleaning and feeding. When we had company he would say, "You stay with your friends." He'd feed the chickens and pick the eggs...til we got too old to stay in the business, when your dad got back from the Army (Korean War). We always tried to save time. I didn't need all the land except the 140 feet of chicken houses, 40 foot brooder house, and the barn for the cow. That's about all the business. It was an easier job (than working in the shipyard). We decided we had enough finally (in the mid 50's). We sold out and retired. We are still here.

That's about all I got (the memories). The money is gone, the eggs are gone, my health is gone...but they're still up here (pointing to his head). I am looking forward to turn over my place to younger fellows...let him fight. Them times are gone--I've been pretty lucky, never heavy sickness. I wish I could have a better memory but part of it is missing already. My advice (after 30+ years in the chicken business) is to be patient and not to look for too much. Salute! (Raising his glass of Cabernet.)

David Marson 1-3-89

David Marson of Sonoma County died Sunday, a day short of the century's last decade and half a year short of his own century.

Marson, 99, would have reached 100 on July 24.

The former poultryman died at the home of his son in Santa Rosa.

Marson was a native of Italy who came to North America in 1917, first to Canada and Oregon and then to California in 1920. He operated a poultry ranch on Todd Road between Santa Rosa and Sebastopol and was part of the Italian-American community.

Marson was married to his first wife 51 years and to his second, Louisa Marson, who died a year ago, for 23 years.

He is survived by his son, Richard Marson, Santa Rosa, and by four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Recitation of the rosary will be 7:30 p.m. today at the Pleasant Hill-Analy O'Leary Mortuary in Sebastopol. Friends will meet Thursday at St. Sebastian's Catholic Church in Sebastopol for a Mass of Christian Burial at 11 a.m.

Entombment will be at Sebastopol Memorial Lawn.

MARSON

PETALUMA HISTORICAL MUSEUM
Oral History Program

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For and in consideration of the participation by the Petaluma Historical Museum in any programs involving the dissemination of ~~tape-recorded memoirs and~~ oral history material for publication, copyright, and other uses, I hereby release all right, title, or interest in any and to all of my ~~tape recorded~~ memoirs to the Petaluma Historical Museum and declare that they may be used without any restriction whatsoever and may be copyrighted and published by the said Museum, which may also assign said copyright and publication rights to serious research scholars.

In addition to the rights and authority given to you under the preceeding paragraph, I hereby authorize you to edit, publish, sell and/or license the use of my oral history memoir in any other manner which the Museum considers to be desirable and I waive any claim to any payments which may be received as a consequence thereof by the Museum.

I would appreciate knowing if this is ok with you — Thanks for doing such a wonderful job on the book --!

PLACE 5750 Erland Rd Santa Rosa, CA 95404

DATE August 13, 1994

Renée Marson de Veuves
(Interviewee) (my name was written wrong in the book --.

(for the Petaluma Historical Museum)

I am in agreement to this only on the condition that if I choose to write and/or publish anything about my grandfather David Marson I would be able to do so — I hope there is no problem with this —

I'm not sure if this is ok — but I would like the flexibility to be able to do something on my own —